

Fla. police suspect narcotics ring

Man seized in dope raid

By JERRY LIPMAN

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GULFSTREAM, Fla. — Investigators are probing the background of a New Orleans man held under \$150,000 bond on eight felony charges after his arrest at a house where officers found \$250,000 worth of marijuana.

Percy Ward, 50, and two Atlanta women have been in Palm Beach County Jail in West Palm Beach, 15 miles north of here, since the Sunday night incident.

Officers have charged each with felony possession of marijuana, possessing a drug with

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intent to distribute, possessing, a firearm while committing a felony, possessing destructive devices (Molotov cocktails), smuggling, conspiracy to smuggle, conspiracy to commit a felony and drug-law violations.

The Atlanta women are Johnnie Beatrice Couch, 42, and Louise Salisbury, 41. Police are looking for two men who escaped from officers Sunday, and they speculate the arrests have broken up a major international smuggling operation.

Gulfstream police and Palm Beach County sheriff's deputies found 1,200 to 1,500

pounds of marijuana and a cache of Molotov cocktails in a van with a Georgia license plate parked outside the house where the arrests occurred.

Inside the house were 12 to 15 quarts of Canadian whiskey with no revenue stamps on the bottles, said Sheriff William Heidtman. "This makes us believe the marijuana and whiskey were smuggled into the country," he added.

"We also believe this to be the second trip here," Heidtman said. "We believe the van, marijuana and Molotov cocktails were headed for Atlanta in the very near future."